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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the management approaches employed by nursery teachers in Greece to deal with children's behavior problems. In particular, the extent, frequency of use, and effectiveness of behavioral, cognitive, and punitive approaches were investigated with regard to conduct, emotional, and developmentally related problems. Participating were 154 female teachers selected from nursery schools located in three distinct regions of Greece. The teachers completed the questionnaires in regard to a total of 280 children from a total pupil sample of 3,091. The findings showed that teachers appeared to mainly attend to and deal with conduct problems which cause greater disturbance in the classroom. However, emotional and developmentally related problems were also addressed, revealing teachers' concern about their pupils' well-being and development. Teachers seemed to use mainly positive ways in dealing with the children's behavior problems, but they did deliver punishment as well. Finally, the study indicated that teachers appeared to be rather effect oriented, employing a variety of techniques of different theoretical orientation which have been perceived to be effective. (Nine tables detail findings, and the questionnaire is appended. Contains 69 references. (Author/KB)

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MANAGEMENT APPROACHES EMPLOYED BY TEACHERS TO DEAL WITH CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS IN NURSERY CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken in Greece to investigate the management approaches employed by nursery teachers to deal with children's behaviour problems. In particular, the extent, frequency of use and effectiveness of behavioural, cognitive and punitive approaches were investigated with regard to conduct, emotional and developmentally related problems. A questionnaire was developed and applied to a female teacher sample of 154 selected from nursery schools located in three distinct regions of Greece. The questionnaire was completed for 280 children from a total pupil sample of 3.091.

The findings showed that teachers appear to mainly attend to and deal with conduct problems which cause greater disturbance in the classroom. However, emotional and developmentally related problems were also addressed revealing teachers concern about their pupils well-being and development. Teachers seemed to mainly use positive ways in dealing with children's behaviour problems, but they did deliver punishing procedures as well. Finally, the study indicated that teachers appear to be rather effect oriented employing a variety of techniques of different theoretical orientation which have been perceived to be effective.

INTRODUCTION

Research undertaken in Europe and across the Atlantic has clearly revealed that progressively younger children than ever have been perceived as exhibiting behaviour problems in educational settings (Clarizio and McCoy 1983, Lawrence and Steed 1984, Papatheodorou and Ramasut 1993). Consequently, management of such problems appears to become an imperative duty for teachers.

Behaviour management is generally defined as all those actions, conscious and unconscious, which teachers employ in order to enhance children's behaviour in a self-fulfilling, productive and socially acceptable manner (Shea 1978). Other terms such as classroom control or discipline are also widely used in the literature. Classroom control refers to ways which teachers use to minimise children's control problems, while discipline involves control of children for the purpose of holding undesirable impulses and habits in order to encourage self-control (Denscombe 1985, Kaplan 1988).

As both control and discipline involve compulsion (Wilson 1971), the term behaviour management is preferred; it is broader in concept, not associated with negative ideas and provides a caring, happy, relaxed and productive environment (Martin and Norwich 1991).

There are two styles of classroom behaviour management; the habitual style which helps teachers to establish the normal atmosphere of the classroom and the specific techniques which are employed by teachers to deal with incidents of behaviour problems that occur (Roberts 1983). The first style appears to be preventative in nature so that incidents needing the employment of specific techniques are prevented

as much as possible (Kerr and Nelson 1989). However, whatever the style of classroom management, it is important for teachers to have an understanding of the basic principles of any particular approach they use (Shea and Bauer 1987, Kerr and Nelson 1989).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historically, classroom behaviour management approaches have been influenced by the prevailing models of conceptualisation and definition of behaviour problems. Various approaches of different theoretical orientation have been developed by professionals working in different disciplines and most of them have been employed in educational settings (Walker and Shea 1988).

The psychoeducational approach

Up to the 1950s and even during the 1960s, when the psychodynamic/medical model dominated the field of special education, a psychoeducational model was developed in order to deal with children's behaviour problems (Shea and Bauer 1987, Walker and Shea 1988). In terms of the psychoeducational approach, the problem resides within the child and overt behaviour is a symptom of underlying unconscious conflicts (Davie 1989). Teachers' major goal is to understand why children are behaving as they are, and to establish a positive, trusting and meaningful relationship. The psychoeducational approach places emphasis on accepting children as they are, developing a mentally healthy classroom atmosphere, providing order and routine in the classroom schedule, and eliminating extraneous environmental stimuli (Walker and Shea 1988).

The behavioural approach

In the 1960s the behavioural approach gained credibility in dealing with behaviour problems. The behavioural approach focuses on objectively observable behaviour rather than on any underlying disorder within the individual. Attention is paid to the specific behaviours individuals exhibit and not the reasons why they exhibit these behaviours (Docking 1980, Merrett 1981, Shea and Bauer 1987, Nelson and Rutherford Jnr 1988, Levis 1990, McBernutt et al 1989).

Behaviour is studied in the context of the immediate environment rather than in distant historical or early life events and emphasis is placed on assessing current situational determinants of the behaviour, that is the antecedent and consequent events surrounding the behaviour identified (Presland 1989, Kerr and Nelson. 1989).

On the basis of this theoretical background, behaviourally oriented professionals have devised and implemented numerous intervention programmes, strategies and specific techniques which are classified into two major categories, that is, behaviour enhancement procedures and behaviour reduction procedures. In the behaviour enhancement procedures, rewarding techniques attempt to strengthen, maintain or increase the frequency of an appropriate behaviour. While, in the behaviour reduction procedures punishment techniques are used to eliminate the frequency of inappropriate behaviour (Merrett and Wheldall 1987, Nelson and Rutherford Jnr 1988, Kazdin 1990).

Both behaviour enhancement and behaviour reduction have been found applicable in classroom environment and across all group ages and all kinds of behaviour problems (Parish et al.1986, Sainato et al.1986, Atwater and Morris.1988, Wheldall and Merrett.1992). In general, teachers appear to work on procedures and techniques that redirect pupils toward appropriate behaviour (Fantuzzo and Atkins.1991, Trovato et al.1992, Cameron and Pierce.1994). Ignoring misbehaviour and showing approval for appropriate behaviour have also been found to be used, but the latter is the main factor in classroom management (Madsen et al.1968, Trovato et al.1992).

Some researchers have reported mild punitive techniques to be effective (Reynolds and Murgatroyd.1977, Kazdin.1990), but, generally, punishment is considered as the least effective intervention as it results in short term suppression of the undesirable behaviour rather than in elimination of it in the long term (Dollard.1972, Fontana.1985, Kazdin.1990, Wheldall and Merrett.1992). It may teach children what not to do, but it does not provide any instruction in what children should do under the circumstances (Kaplan.1988). It directly attacks the relationship of mutual respect between teacher and pupil and results in negative feelings (Alberto and Troutman.1986, Kaplan.1986). In particular for young children, who often do not know what to do or how something must be done, punishment for mistakes may makes things worse by inducing fear and anxiety.

Teachers, however, would seem to use punishment because of the reinforcing effect of its immediate results, although some may argue that for some children punishment is the last resort (Newell.1972, Docking.1980, Walker and Shea.1988). Corporal

punishment in particular seems to be an escape from the responsibilities inherent in the relationship between teacher and pupil, and therefore there is no good excuse for using it (Newell.1972).

But, by the 1970s researchers had started to question the emphasis given to overt behaviour modification. Ignoring the underlying factors which might be responsible for the behaviour means that symptoms are treated but causes are neglected; by not taking into account pupils' feelings, thoughts and values, there is a danger that children's self-expression is sacrificed in the name of efficient management and conformity. Finally behavioural techniques simply change overt behaviour without achieving children's own conscious reappraisal of their behaviour (Docking.1980).

The cognitive approach

The growing dissatisfaction with the behavioural approach led many researchers to shift their interest to studying cognitive concepts (Ingram and Scott.1990). In the cognitive approach emphasis is placed on how individuals cognitively structure their experience and approach situations and, in particular, on how they modify incongruent cognition. It is suggested that a change in cognition will result in changes in overt behaviour (Ingram and Scott.1990, kazdin.1990, Levis.1990).

The principal goal of cognitive approaches is the self-control of pupils' own behaviour rather than the external control of behaviour as it happens with the behavioural interventions (Carpenter and Apter.1988). Such an aim becomes of paramount importance for nursery and primary school children who are at a developmental stage

in which their cognition is not highly developed; young children often do not know what is acceptable or what is expected from them, and sometimes they are not even aware that they are irritating and misbehaving (Fontana 1985, Montgomery 1989). Teachers then tend to adopt cognitive interventions in teaching which emphasise the important role cognition and cognitive processes play in the manifestation and change of overt behaviour (Kagan and Smith 1988, Levis 1990). Factors which greatly contribute to the successful delivery of the cognitive approach include careful instructions and guidance, consistency and fairness, awareness of contextual events, knowledge of the children, empathy, imagination, sense of humour and application of self-control curriculum (Fontana 1985).

It is often argued that the cognitive approach tends to emphasise rationality and neglect emotions (Ingram and Scott 1990). It seems, however, as Fontana (1985) states, that teachers are also concerned with children's mental activity and their inner world of thoughts, motives, memories and emotions. Therefore, affective variables such as feelings, thoughts and interpersonal relationships and the way these affect cognition have been increasingly studied and considered. Currently, an emphasis has been placed in assisting pupils' development of positive self-control and high self-esteem (Carpenter and Apter 1988, Ingram and Scott 1990).

Furthermore, teachers need to get to know their pupils, to show empathy and try to find out the reasons behind the pupils' actions; dislike for a particular behaviour does not represent dislike for the child and pupils are given the opportunity to express their

own views and feelings about a particular behaviour (Fontana 1985, Ahmad and Bano 1996).

The cognitive approach aims to deal with both the causes of a problem and the particular symptoms exhibited. However, the main objection to the cognitive approach is based on the grounds that this is vague, imprecise and subjective (Fontana 1985). Cognitive interventions have not been conducted with a view to theory rather than their effectiveness. Though they are typically associated with the psychoeducational orientation to behaviour management they are broader in the sense that they are not used in isolation, but they are interwoven into the complexity of setting variables (Carpenter and Apter 1988, Ingram and Scott 1990).

The ecosystemic approach

The behaviour management approaches referred to so far tend to focus on the child as being the main source of the problem, and adopt techniques that aim to alter a particular behavioural function or process within the child (Kazdin 1990). This rather narrow way of conceptualising problems and problem management approaches has been heavily criticised and behavioural approaches in particular have been seen as a superficial analysis of problems of a non simplistic nature (Brown 1986).

According to Molnar and Lindquist (1989), in an educational context teachers and their pupils are part of a classroom ecosystem and, therefore, they are influenced by the ecosystemic relations in that classroom. Behaviour, in ecological terms, is seen as an expression of ongoing dynamic interrelationships between the individual and his or

her ecosystem rather than being residing within the individual and his or her environment (Shea and Bauer 1987, Cooper and Upton 1992).

The school ecosystem consists of all events that might affect the pupils' behaviour at any given point in time, that is, environmental events, peer interactions, specific instructions preceded immediately before the behaviour problem occurs, the general conditions to which the pupil may be exposed such as seating arrangements, subject taught, demands made upon the pupil, the pupils' own emotional and physiological conditions such anxiety, anger, fatigue and so on (Foster-Johnson and Dunlap 1993). But, the role of individuals' perceptions and interpretations of any given situation is strongly emphasised. The assumption that individuals behave in response to the way they interpret the situation becomes the basic principle of the ecosystemic approach. Often there is more than one valid interpretation of any particular situation, and therefore changing the interpretation will lead to a change in behaviour which in turn will influence others' perception and behaviour (Molnar and Linquist 1989, Cooper and Upton 1992).

In the light of these ideas, it is suggested that teachers should come to re-examine specific problematic situations by redefining the problem behaviour, self-evaluating their own reactions to this problem behaviour and considering what purpose the behaviour serves for the pupil (Upton and Cooper 1990, Cooper and Upton 1990a, 1990b, Cooper and Upton 1992). An empathetic understanding then becomes the key feature in the ecosystemic approach; the use of empathy may help teachers to continually analyse the experience of schooling from the pupil's point of view (Cooper

and Upton. 1992). As Purkey and Novak (1984) point out "What may be seen illogical from an external point of view is only an inadequate understanding of what the world looks like from the internal viewpoint of the behaving person" (p.32).

At a theoretical level the ecosystemic approach seems to be more promising in dealing with behaviour problems, there is, however, a scarcity of research into its effectiveness(Cooper and Upton.1992a;1992b). Carpenter and Apter (1988) suggest that the conceptualisation of the ecological network of a child remains a proposed synthesis and its complexity appears to be resistant to the quantitative methods favoured in contemporary research. However, the ecosystemic approach seems to indicate new ways for research and application, and to provide a valuable addition to that which has already been done by some advocates of other behaviour management approaches (Cooper and Upton.1992).

Concluding remarks on classroom behaviour management approaches

For more than three decades, now, there has been evidence of a movement from a purely psychoeducational approach, which mainly addressed within the child causes, to a behavioural approach, which stands at the other end of the continuum by addressing the external stimuli. The behavioural approach, however, has tended to ignore the individual's cognition and feelings and has not taken into account the multi-faceted nature of behaviour problems, which are largely determined by the interaction processes between all the parts involved in a particular ecosystem. Both cognitive and ecosystemic approaches have made important contributions to these issues, at least at a theoretical level. Putting the underlying principles into practice is less simple .

Research has shown that teachers tend to employ a variety of techniques of different theoretical orientation, indicating that their eclecticism is effect rather than theory oriented (Carpenter and Apter 1988, Trovato et al 1992). They employ and use whatever techniques have been proved -by trial and error- to be effective and work in their particular situation with their particular pupils (Zabel 1986, Lavoritano and Segal 1992). In general, teachers tend to use positive ways of dealing with children's behaviour problems, but they do deliver punishment as well (Docking 1980, Trovato et al 1992).

The ease with which management approaches can be applied within classroom and the type of behaviour problems teachers have to deal with are also two other factors which seem to affect teachers decisions about the employment of management techniques. Teachers tend to avoid techniques that are complicate, time-consuming and require extra materials for their application, as often is the case with the behavioural approach (Witt and Martens 1987, Reimers et al 1987, Schneider et al 1992). In addition, teachers appear to attend to and deal mainly with conduct problems rather than with emotional problems mainly because the former causes greater disturbance (Docking 1980, Merrett and Wheldall 1987, Trovato et al 1992).

Teachers' eclecticism with regard to behaviour management techniques is likely to be an advantage as long as teachers do not allow one approach to confuse the other, either in their own eyes or in those of children (Fontana 1985). It seems that an integrated perspective which would also consider teachers' experience and school pragmatics would be more promising than any one of the approaches discussed alone

(Nelson and Rutherford Jnr.1988). It is suggested that classroom behaviour management needs both a conceptual and skills based approach (Zabel.1988, Martin and Norwich.1991). However, it is of worth noting, as Burden (1992) states, that pragmatics/skills based approaches need to be contextulised within a coherent theory of learning and teaching.

AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The data presented and discussed in this paper are part of a larger research project undertaken in Greece in order to investigate teachers' attitudes toward children's behaviour problems in nursery classes and management approaches employed. In particular, the study aimed to investigate the frequency and effectiveness of each of the behavioural, cognitive and punitive approaches used for conduct, emotional and developmentally related problems.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was undertaken among 225 Greek nursery teachers. The method for selecting the teacher sample followed multi-stage, stratified and simple random sampling (Hannagan.1982, Borg and Gall.1989). Nine sub-groups were identified in three selected regions of Greece (Papatheodorou and Ramasut.1994). Twenty-five nursery teachers in each of the nine sub-groups were randomly selected to take part in the study (N:225). The total pupil sample was 3091 (1568 boys, 1523 girls).

The instrument

The instrument used (Appendix 1) was developed for the purpose of the present study with items elicited from the Greek nursery teachers by using the Likert-scale method (Likert 1967). Items suggested by the Greek nursery teachers for both behaviour problems and management techniques were compared with items used by other researchers to investigate behaviour problems (Rutter 1967, McGuire and Richman 1986a) and management techniques (Fontana, 1985, Kerr and Nelson 1989, Montgomery 1989, DES 1989). Following this, the items were sorted for overlap and ambiguity and finally classified into broad categories of behaviour problems and management approaches (Papatheodorou 1990, Papatheodorou 1995)

Statements referring to behaviour problems were classified into the three broad categories of behaviour problems found by other researchers (Behar and Stringfield 1974, Achenbach and Edelbrock 1978, McGuire and Richman 1986b). These are:

Conduct problems (Acting-out) which disturb the teacher and the learning/teaching process, and affect the pupils' learning.

Emotional problems (Withdrawn behaviours) which usually do not affect the teaching process, but which may affect the pupils' learning.

Developmentally related problems (Immaturity) which do not necessarily disturb the teacher, but which may affect the pupils' learning and the teaching process.

Statements referring to management approaches were classified into three categories frequently cited in the literature, that is:

Behavioural approach which is based on the main principle of the behaviourist school of thought, that is, behaviour is learned through reinforcement. Therefore, change in behaviour may be achieved through reinforcement of the appropriate behaviour and punishment or ignoring inappropriate behaviour (Merrett.1981, Presland.1989, Milan.1990).

Cognitive approach which is based on the assumption that young children's cognitive abilities may set limits to the behaviour they display (Chazan and Laing.1985, Fontana.1985, Carpenter and Apter.1988, Montgomery.1989, Levis.1990). This approach was extended to include techniques which refer to teachers' own cognition about the children's state and condition. Although such techniques have been closely associated with the psychoeducational approach, nowadays they are seen as part of the broader context of the cognitive approach (Carpenter and Apter.1988, Ingram and Scott.1990).

Punitive approach: This is often used by teachers for short term control in the classroom without the necessary intention of changing behaviour, as it is the case of punishment in the behavioural approach (Brophy and Rohrkemper.1981). During the pilot study, respondents expressed the view that they might use mild but not severe forms of punishment. For this, the punitive approach was further split into mild and severe.

The final instrument constructed was piloted to test its reliability. Statistical reliability coefficient was carried out by using the split-half method and employing the alpha "a" coefficient (Downie and Heath.1983, Anastasi.1988). It was found to be .92.

In the main study, teachers were asked to complete the instrument for two of their pupils whom they perceived as exhibiting behaviour problems. In particular, teachers were asked to identify specific aspects of their pupils' behaviours and state the management approach(es) which they employed in order to deal with them. In total, 154 nursery teachers returned the questionnaire completed for 280 children. The overall response rate was 68.4 per cent.

The SPSS PC+ package was used in the School of Education, Cardiff University, to analyse data. Data discussed in the present paper are presented in simple descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages (Norusis 1988). However, it is of worth noting that, in some cases where samples become small (especially with regard to severe punitive techniques), percentages may not be stable and, therefore, findings need to be cautiously approached (Downie and Heath 1983).

RESULTS-DISCUSSION

The extent of use of each management approach for each category of behaviour problems

Table 1 shows that behavioural techniques were primarily used for conduct problems (12.80 per cent), but a considerable percentage of them was also employed for emotional problems (9.90 per cent) and developmentally related problems (9.10 per cent). The cognitive techniques were employed across all three categories of behaviour problems, although slightly more were used for conduct problems (13.80 per cent) and emotional problems (13.40 per cent) than for developmentally related problems (11.50 per cent). Almost half of the mild punitive techniques were used for

conduct problems (9.40 per cent), and approximately a quarter of them for each, emotional and developmentally related problems (4.90 per cent and 4.70 per cent, respectively). Similarly, almost half of the severe punitive techniques were used for conduct problems (4.60 per cent), but between a quarter and a third of them were also employed for emotional and developmentally related problems (2.90 per cent and 3.00 per cent, respectively).

These findings seem to support the view expressed by other researchers that teachers tend to mainly attend to and deal with conduct problems which have a disturbing effect on the teaching and learning process (Trovato et al.1992, Wheldall and Merrett.1992). The fact that teachers implemented a considerable amount of management approaches to help children to overcome emotional and developmentally related problems presents a positive finding. Teachers appear to be as much interested in children's feelings, thoughts and emotional state as in the disturbing effect of conduct problems (Descombe.1985, Fontana.1985).

In general, teachers appear to use mainly positive management approaches (behavioural and cognitive), but they do deliver punishment as well. Although punishment is directed to all categories of behaviour problems, it is used more often in relation to conduct problems. The disturbing effect of behaviour problems appears to be an influential factor in teachers' decisions about the management of these problems.

Frequency of use and effectiveness of the cognitive approach

The vast majority of cognitive techniques (approximately 95 per cent) had either frequent or very frequent use. The very frequent use was higher for emotional problems (63.4 per cent) and less for developmentally related problems (58.7 per cent) and conduct problems (56.6 per cent) (Table 2).

With regard to effectiveness, the vast majority of cognitive techniques were reported to be either effective or very effective. The percentage of very effective cognitive techniques was higher for emotional problems (33.9 per cent) and developmentally related problems (29.9 per cent) than for conduct problems (22.2 per cent) (Table 3).

The extensive use of the cognitive approach may be explained by the fact that many of the cognitive techniques (e.g. guidance, counselling and reasoning) do not require extra preparation, time, materials and, thus, they are easily applied in the classroom context (Witt and Martens.1983). In addition, as these techniques emphasise cognitive processes, children's inner world and emotional well-being, teachers may prefer them in order to assist young children to develop more appropriate forms of behaviour. As such, the cognitive approach was revealed to be largely effective.

It might be also argued that teachers' preference for the cognitive approach is due to the fact that cognitive techniques allow them to modify incongruent cognition, to cognitively structure their own experience and approach to the situations and act accordingly (Ingram and Scott 1990, Kazdin 1990).

Frequency of use and effectiveness of the behavioural approach

The vast majority of behavioural techniques were frequently or very frequently used across all three categories of behaviour problems. However, the very frequent use was higher for conduct problems (34.9 per cent) than for emotional problems (30.0 per cent) and developmentally related problems (28.8 per cent) (Table 4).

With regard to effectiveness, Table 5 shows that the majority of behavioural techniques were reported to be either effective or very effective across all three categories of behaviour problems. The effectiveness of behavioural techniques was judged to be slightly better for emotional problems (17.7 per cent) than for developmentally related problems and conduct problems (14.1 per cent and 13.8 per cent, respectively).

Considering the difficulties the application of the behavioural approach may impose in the classroom (Docking 1980, Reimers et al 1987, Schneider et al 1992), a surprisingly large number of them was used across all three categories of behaviour problems and reported to be effective. It seems that the reported effectiveness of this approach may have also influenced the extent of its use. However, the role which the effectiveness may play is not clearly and consistently supported if one considered the degree of effectiveness of the behavioural approach. Although the behavioural approach was

reported very effective for emotional problems, its use was very frequent for conduct problems. Once again, the disturbing effect of conduct problems seems to have influenced the employment of management approaches.

Frequency of use and effectiveness of the mild punitive approach

Approximately one third of the mild punitive techniques were either frequently or very frequently used across all three categories of behaviour problems. Very frequent use of mild punitive techniques was mainly made only for conduct and emotional problems (7.8 per cent and 1.2 per cent), but not for developmentally related problems (nil per cent) (Table 6). With regard to effectiveness, between a quarter and a third of mild punitive techniques were reported to be either effective or very effective (Table 7). In general, the findings referring to effectiveness of the mild punitive techniques tend to support those of other researchers, (Reynolds 1977). One, then, could argue that such effectiveness may has also affected the frequency of use of these techniques. The fact that mild punitive techniques were relatively less frequently used than cognitive and behavioural techniques seems to support the suggestion that teachers prefer to use positive ways in dealing with children's behaviour problems (Fantuzzo and Atkins.1991, Trovato et al.1992).

The very frequent use of mild punitive techniques for conduct problems may be seen in the light of the disturbing effect of these problems (Merrett and Wheldall.1987), while the frequent use of them for emotional problems, although a questionable finding, may be interpreted in the light of the nature of these problems; immediate results may be

more evident for children exhibiting emotional problems than for children showing conduct or developmentally related problems.

Frequency of use and effectiveness of the severe punitive approach

Severe punitive techniques were found to have both frequent and very frequent use for conduct problems (6.6 per cent ,8.0 per cent, respectively) and frequent only use for emotional problems (20.8 per cent) and developmentally related problems (20.4 per cent) (Table 12). With regard to effectiveness, approximately 8.0 per cent of the severe punitive techniques have been reported to be effective for both conduct and emotional problems, but only 1.8 per cent for developmentally related problems (Table 13).

The findings of the present study have shown that severe punitive techniques were perceived to be largely ineffective, supporting further the findings of other studies (Walker and Shea.1988, Levis.1990). However, the continued frequent use of severe punitive techniques and the perception that they are effective for at least some types of behaviour problems remains a questionable finding. The main question raised is "what do teachers understand when they talk about the effectiveness of management approaches?". Do they consider effectiveness in the long term which implies improvement in children's behaviour, or effectiveness in the short term which is the suppression of undesirable behaviour and the immediate solution to teachers' own problems?

Some researchers argue that teachers ill-equipped by their training to deal with children's behaviour problems may use management approaches to keep order in the classroom (short term effectiveness) rather than to attempt to achieve elimination of the undesirable behaviour over time (long term effectiveness) (Descombe.1985, Merrett.1987, Zabel.1988). This may be the case for Greek nursery teachers as well. In the context of teacher training in Greece, classroom behaviour management has not yet been identified as an issue for particular consideration and study. Thus, in the classroom teachers may come to use techniques which have been developed through experience and by trial and error processes. Therefore, one might argue that the assumed effectiveness of management approaches may be primarily judged by the immediate results brought about, whether or not long term effectiveness has been achieved.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the foregoing discussion has shown that management approaches were mainly used for conduct problems. Both, the behavioural and cognitive approaches represented the majority of the techniques used, but punitive techniques were also found to have a place in the classroom. Both, the behavioural and cognitive approaches were found to have frequent use, and to be effective the first and very effective the latter. The mild punitive approach was found to have frequent usage and to be effective as well. The severe punitive approach was found to be largely ineffective, but still used with differing frequency for different types of behaviour problems

In general, the findings of the present study have shown that the type of behaviour problems children exhibit seem to primarily influence teachers' decisions about their management. Teachers appear to be more willing to deal with conduct problems which cause greater disturbance in the classroom, but emotional and developmentally related problems were also addressed revealing teachers' concern about their pupils well-being. Furthermore, teachers reported the use of mainly positive ways in dealing with children's behaviour problems, but they do deliver punishing procedures as well, supporting earlier research. Finally, the study indicated that teachers appeared to be effect oriented rather than theory oriented. They tend to employ and use a variety of techniques of different theoretical orientation which have been perceived to be effective.

The demonstration of teachers' eclecticism with regard to employment of management approaches seems to further support the view that an integrated perspective in dealing with children's behaviour problems would be more promising than the use of any one of the approaches studied. In the light of such findings, the ecosystemic approach seems to provide the relevant theoretical framework for an integral model for the management of behaviour problems. The underlying principles of the behavioural and cognitive approaches are important in terms of their own theoretical framework, but all become of great importance within the ecosystemic approach. The ecosystemic approach focuses as much on individuals and their environments as the other two approaches alone, but emphasis is placed on the dynamic interrelationships between individuals and their environment.

In this context, one could argue that teachers' experience, empiricism and classroom pragmatics should be studied as part of the school ecosystem. Future research needed to be undertaken in order to scientifically support the underlying principles of the ecosystemic approach should address these issues in order, as Burden (1992) states, to contextulise them within a coherent theory of teaching and learning.

Table1. The extent of use of each management approach for each category of behaviour problems (N:1639).

Extent of use of management approaches / Behaviour problems	Behavioural F	Behavioural %	Cognitive F	Cognitive %	Mild punitive F	Mild punitive %	Severe punitive F	Severe punitive %
Conduct problems	209	12.8	226	13.8	154	9.4	75	4.6
Emotional problems	163	9.9	219	13.4	81	4.9	48	2.9
Developmentally related problems	149	9.1	189	11.5	71	4.7	49	3.0

Table 2. Frequency of use of the cognitive approach for conduct problems (N:226), emotional problems (N:219) and developmentally related problems (N:189)

Frequency of use / Behaviour problems	Frequent F	Frequent %	Very frequent F	Very frequent %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	90	39.8	128	56.6	218	96.4
Emotional problems	72	32.9	139	63.4	211	96.3
Developmentally related problems	68	35.9	111	58.7	179	94.6

Table 3. Effectiveness of the cognitive approach for conduct problems (N:226), emotional problems (N:219) and developmentally related problems (N:189)

Effectiveness / Behaviour problems	Effective F	Effective %	Very effective F	Very effective %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	137	60.9	50	22.2	187	83.1
Emotional problems	113	51.8	74	33.9	187	85.7
Developmentally related problems	110	58.8	56	29.9	166	88.7

Table4. Frequency of use of the behavioural approach for conduct problems (N:209), emotional problems (N:163) and developmentally related problems (N:149).

Frequency of use / Behaviour problems	Frequent F	Frequent %	Very frequent F	Very frequent %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	90	43.0	73	34.9	163	77.9
Emotional problems	91	55.8	49	30.0	140	85.8
Developmentally related problems	76	51.0	48	28.8	119	79.8

Table 5. Effectiveness of the behavioural approach for conduct problems (N:209), emotional problems (N:163) and developmentally related problems (N:149).

Behaviour problems \ Effectiveness	Effective F	Effective %	Very effective F	Very effective %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	133	63.6	29	13.8	162	77.4
Emotional problems	96	58.9	29	17.7	125	76.6
Developmentally related problems	95	64.2	21	14.1	116	78.3

Table 6. Frequency of use of the mild punitive approach for conduct problems (N:154), emotional problems (N:81) and developmentally related problems (N:77).

Behaviour problems \ Frequency of use	Frequent F	Frequent %	Very frequent F	Very frequent %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	49	31.8	12	7.8	61	36.9
Emotional problems	30	37.0	1	1.2	31	38.2
Developmentally related problems	22	28.5	-	-	22	28.5

Table 7. Effectiveness of the mild punitive approach for conduct problems (N:154), emotional problems (N:81) and developmentally related problems (N:77).

Effectiveness / Behaviour problems	Effective F	Effective %	Very effective F	Very effective %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	51	33.5	6	3.9	57	37.4
Emotional problems	22	27.5	1	1.2	23	28.7
Developmentally related problems	20	25.3	1	1.2	21	26.5

Table 8. Frequency of use of the severe punitive approach for conduct problems (N:75), emotional problems (N:48) and developmentally related problems (N:49).

Frequency of use / Behaviour problems	Frequent F	Frequent %	Very frequent F	Very frequent %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	5	6.6	6	8.0	11	14.6
Emotional problems	10	20.8	-	-	10	20.8
Developmentally related problems	10	20.4	-	-	10	20.4

Table 9. Effectiveness of the severe punitive approach for conduct problems (N:75), emotional problems (N:48) and developmentally related problems (N:49).

Effectiveness / Behaviour problems	Effective F	Effective %	Very effective F	Very effective %	Total F	Total %
Conduct problems	5	8.1	-	-	5	8.1
Emotional problems	10	8.3	-	-	10	8.3
Developmentally related problems	10	1.8	-	-	10	1.8

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Appendix 1: **Management approaches used for each category of behaviour problems (Excerpt from the main instrument)**

Behaviour problems	Management techniques	Frequency: Very often	Frequency: Often	Frequency: Not very often	Effectiveness: Very eff/ve	Effectiveness: eff/ve	Effectiveness: Not very eff/ive
Conduct problems which disturb the teacher and affect the teaching/ learning process. (e.g. Aggressive/ Provocative/ Domineering behaviour. Overacting/ Hintering others. Attention seeking/ Showing-off behaviour.)	**Behavioural** e.g. -Ignore misbehaviour. -Temporary removal from an inappropriate activity. -Immediate praise/reward for appropriate behaviour. -Organize to encourage appropriate behaviour. -Regrouping.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Cognitive e.g. -Showing understanding/ empathy. -Encouragement. -Reasoning with the child. -Guidance/ Counselling. -Giving chances to the child to improve. -Sense of humour. -Cooperation with parents/agencies.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Mild punitive e.g. -Reprimands. -Keep in during breaktime. -Withdrawn from favourite activities. -Leaving the child to face the consequences of his/her behaviour.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Severe punitive e.g. -Shouting at/ Threatening the child. -Smacking/Shaking the child. -Irony/Sarcasm.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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Behaviour problems	Management techniques	Frequency: Very often	Frequency: Often	Frequency: Not very often	Effectiveness: Very eff/ve	Effectiveness: eff/ve	Effectiveness: Not very eff/ive
Emotional problems, which do not affect the teaching process, but may affect child's learning. (e.g. Shyness/ Timidity. Withdrawn behaviour. Unhapiness/ Depression. Feelings of isecurity. Rejection by peers).	**Behavioural e.g.** -Ignore misbehaviour. -Temporary removal from an inappropriate activity. -Immediate praise/reward for appropriate behaviour. -Organize to encourage appropriate behaviour. -Regrouping.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Cognitive e.g. -Showing understanding/ empathy. -Encouragement. -Reasoning with the child. -Guidance/ Counselling. -Giving chances to the child to improve. -Sense of humour. -Cooperation with parents/agencies.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Mild punitive e.g. -Reprimands. -Keep in during breaktime. -Withdrawn from favourite activities. -Leaving the child to face the consequences of his/her behaviour.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Severe punitive e.g. -Shouting at/ threatening the child. -Smacking/shaking the child. -Irony/sarcasm	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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Behaviour problems	Management techniques	Frequency: Very often	Often	Not very often	Effectiveness: Very eff/ve	eff/ve	Not very eff/ive
Developmentally related problems which may not disturb the teacher, but may affect the child's progress. (e.g. Poor concentration. Communication problems. Poor motor control/ Clumsiness. Negativeness. Being over-protected. Difficulties in cooperation).	**Behavioural** e.g. -Ignore misbehaviour. -Temporary removal from an inappropriate activity. -Immediate praise/reward for appropriate behaviour. -Organize to encourage appropriate behaviour. -Regrouping.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Cognitive e.g. -Showing understanding/ empathy. -Encouragement. -Reasoning with the child. -Guidance/ Counselling. -Giving chances to the child to improve. -Sense of humour. -Cooperation with parents/agencies.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Mild punitive e.g. -Reprimands. -Keep in during breaktime. -Withdrawn from favourite activities. -Leaving the child to face the consequences of his/her behaviour.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
	Severe punitive e.g. -Shouting at/ threatening the child. -Smacking/shaking the child. -Irony/sarcasm	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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